

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1732

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 5341

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, TSPA

SUBJ: VISIT OF ASTRONAUT COL. JAMES IRWIN TO AREA

1. ADVANCEMAN, DR. BILL RITTENHOUSE, VICE PRESIDENT OF HIGH FLIGHT, CALLED ON PAO DECEMBER 12 CONCERNING IRWIN VISIT TO KUWAIT, SEEKING WHOM TO CONTACT AND ASKING ADVICE ON ACTIVITIES AND CONTENT.

2. PAO RECALLED IRWIN VISIT TO JORDAN EXACTLY YEAR AGO, AT WHICH TIME HE PRESENTED PLAQUE TO KING HUSSEIN AT PUBLIC GATHERING AND THEN GAVE TALK ABOUT HIS TRIP TO MOON STRESSING RELIGIOUS IMPACT OF THIS EXPERIENCE ON HIM IN FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIAN TERMS. AT ONE POINT HE HELD UP SMALL BLACK STONE AND COMPARED SUPERSTITION OF WORSHIPPING SUCH OBJECTS WITH TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH. REACTION OF JORDANIANS WAS BEMUSEMENT, BUT PAO POINTED OUT THAT THIS EMPHASIS DID NOT SERVE WELL GOOD WILL NATURE OF VISIT THERE AND NOTED THAT SUCH EMPHASIS COULD EVINCE MUCH STRONGER REACTION IN GULF.

3. RITTENHOUSE SAID THIS WAS EXACTLY THE KIND OF INSIGHT HE WANTED TO TAKE BACK FROM ADVANCE TRIP. HE NOTED THAT WHILE HIGH FLIGHT IS ESSENTIALLY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, MAIN REASON FOR TRIP IS TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND THAT HE NEEDED
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SUCH ADVICE FROM THOSE WHO KNOW THIS AREA. HE FELT SURE THAT

IRWIN WOULD WANT TO PLAY DOWN RELIGIOUS ASPECTS, BEING AWARE OF SITUATION.

4. RITTENHOUSE SEES TOUR IN TERMS OF GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR U.S. AS WELL AS FOR IRWIN AND HIGH FLIGHT. HE SAID HE IS THEREFORE SEEKING OUT EMBASSIES IN PLACES HE VISITS FOR COUNSEL, THOUGH DID NOT EXPLAIN WHY HE FAILED TO DO SO IN DOHA. STOLTZFUS

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